

Religious Language in Christina

Rossetti's "Goblin Market"

Christina Rossetti's poem "Goblin Market" has thematically been approached several different ways—mainly because of its broadness. Although "Goblin Market" has many different themes, I don't doubt that Rossetti specifically wrote it around one particular theme. After reading "Goblin Market" and dissecting various metaphors and images, I have come to the conclusion that Rossetti's intentions were to express the views and beliefs of Christianity. Although Rossetti uses a feminine approach to expose certain Biblically-related themes to elaborate on her Christian theme, nonetheless, her main focus seems to have been to present a story with Christian morality.

“Goblin Market” is a story about two sisters (Laura and Lizzie) who battle with the temptations of sin every day. When her sister Laura falls into the temptation of sin, Lizzie, to save her sister from death, places her own life in danger as Christ did for whoever believes. The story seems to preach the typical Christian view of staying away from sin and overcoming the desires of the flesh.

“Goblin Market” is Rossetti’s most renowned and most discussed poem, mainly because it has left a long lasting impact on literature due to the many different theoretical approaches of viewing it. Besides the religious/Biblical approach that I have taken to dissect this poem, it has also been critically examined as feminist criticism—which is usually side by side the religious criticism, and lesbian criticism.

From a Feminist perspective, Rossetti rewrites Christian stories by replacing male characters—such as Adam and Christ, with female characters (Laura and Lizzie). In her article analyzing “Goblin Market,” Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt focuses on Rossetti’s “conscious attempt to revise traditional Christian myth in order to produce an alternative, ‘feminist’ reading to the two most fundamental stories in Christian lore—the fall of humankind from grace and our redemption through the blood of Christ” (41). Shurbutt develops her argument by comparing the similar traits and characteristics that the female characters from the poem have with the male characters portrayed in the Bible. In agreement with Shurbutt, is Marian Shalkhauser, who notes that the poem has a “feminine cast of characters [...] substituted for the masculine cast of the Biblical sin-redemption sequence” (1). The only male characters that appear in the poem are the

goblin men who are described as evil. Even when the sisters are mentioned to have gotten married at the end of the poem, there is no mention of their husbands. The difficult accomplishment of these women to survive the traps set forth by men is clearly meant to empower the female race and prove that they are more than conquerors.

Given some of the descriptions of the relationship between Lizzie and Laura, it is possible for one to jump to the conclusion that there is something homoerotic going on between them. Critics such as Lillian Faderman have pointed this out, as they mention the description of how intimately the sisters sleep next to each other and Laura's act of sucking the fruit juices off her sister. The poem seems to be preaching to women that sexual relations with men are poisonous to one's health as opposed to having them with women.

Even with its various apparent critical analyses that are justifiable, it is hard to avoid the Christian overtones that sound through the poem. Though I consider the lesbian approach, I support my case against it to prove that this is not Rossetti's general message and do so by explaining these lesbian undertones as essentially being religious.

While a feminist or lesbian interpretation is plausible, when details about Rossetti's life are considered, the religious interpretation of the poem comes into sharper focus. It is necessary to give a few important details about Rossetti who, according to Jan Susina, is "one of the two major religious poets of the nineteenth century" (2). These details are important to mention to understand what influenced her work. Many critics have agreed that one of the most influential elements of her life was her religious faith. Susina goes on to say that Rossetti is "best known for her poetry on religious or

inspirational themes”—as inspired by her Anglo-Catholic faith (2). Some of her work include “Called to Be Saints,” “The Prodigal Son,” and “Letter and Spirit,” all poems that deal with religious faith. In a 1982 article in *Victorian Poetry*, Dolores Rosenblum achieves this idea: “all Rossetti’s poetry is deeply religious, concerned always with the relation of this world to the next” (Shurbutt 40). Agreeing with both critics, Mary Arseneau states that:

The importance of Rossetti’s faith for her life and art can hardly be overstated. More than half of her poetic output is devotional and the works of her later years in both poetry and prose are almost exclusively so.

(5)

Rossetti is so passionate and faithful about her religion that she cancelled her engagement to James Collison because he wasn’t of the same religion as she (de Groot 3).

Although I admit that overall “Goblin Market” focuses on religious views, critics have managed to derive different religious aspects and viewpoints from the poem. The common link found in the religious critiques of the poem is the existence of good, evil, sin, and redemption. An example of a different religious analysis is where I, along with Shalkhauser, view Lizzie as a female Christ-like figure as opposed to Sarah Fiona Winters, who views her as the Adam to Laura’s Eve. Similar to Shalkhauser, I view Laura as not only Eve but also Adam. Seeing the poem in a different way, Winters, argues that “Goblin Market” is the re-write of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Though I can see how Winters have come to formulate this comparison, I must say that I have noticed many flaws in her argument, some of which involve her seeing Lizzie as Adam

and others which involve her saying that God is absent in the poem. This sways me more towards Shalkhauser's analysis of the poem. Other critics, such as Marylu Hill and Debra Cumberland, believe roughly the same analysis as Shalkhauser, but further examine certain passages in the poem that seem problematic to their argument. They both particularly focus on the erotic tone of Lizzie's erotic Eucharistic proposal to her sister.

Examining "Goblin Market" in light of Rossetti's life suggests that she incorporated her religious convictions into the various metaphors and symbols in the poem. A lot of these metaphors and symbols relate to Christianity, including Biblical references. "Goblin Market" exposes the continuing battle of good versus evil. Evil, in this poem, exists in the goblin men who offer their sinful gifts. The sinful gifts which the goblin men offer are fruits, which, if indulged and eaten, would be the actual act of sinning. These fruits resemble the forbidden fruits from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which Satan tempted Eve to eat—as mentioned in the book of Genesis. Continuing with the Christian religious theme, Rossetti creates the characters of Laura and Jeanie—who correspondingly relate to Adam and Eve, and the character of Lizzie who seizes the role of a Christ-like figure.

In order to understand Rossetti's overall Christian theme, it is important to understand how the representation of the fruits are considered sin, the goblin men as Satan, Laura and Jeanie as Adam/Eve, and Lizzie as Christ-like. By making these characters represent those from the Bible, Rossetti retells the story of the fall of man,

found in the Old Testament, but rewrites an immediate redemption through the self sacrificing act of another as portrayed in the New Testament.

Lizzie and Laura see eating the fruit in this way; the action of committing a sin is represented by eating the fruits of the goblin men. While walking in the brook, surrounded by the cries and offerings of the goblin men, Lizzie explains to Laura that it is wrong to accept the gifts from the goblin men. Lizzie asserts “No, no, no; / Their offers should not charm us, / Their evil gifts would harm us” (64-66). From this passage on, the readers are given the impression that the fruits of the goblin men are “evil” and would lead to some sort of destruction—which the reader is yet unaware of. Although very well disguised, the fruits are presented as being sinful. Shalkhauser agrees “Satanic goblins offer her the lures of the world: a crown, wealth, a golden plate of fruit, which Laura says is ‘too huge for me to hold’ [177], and which the goblins later tell Lizzie ‘no man can carry’ [376], for no man can bear alone the burden of sin” (2). The goblin men clearly seem to be offering the young women sin.

Despite her knowledge of the dangers she may face by welcoming the “evil gifts,” Laura however makes the decision to involve herself with them. Describing Laura’s failure to withstand the offers, Shurbutt explains that she is “Captivated by the seductive call of the satanic goblin men, who appropriately slink, crawl, and slither their way into her consciousness (70-76), Laura/Eve succumbs to their serpentine enticement and yearns to partake of their luscious and lascivious fruit” (41). Although people seem to be aware of the negativities of sin, they still manage to find themselves lured and tempted. Similar

to the tempting and pleasing way that sin presents itself, the fruits appear “sweet to tongue and sound to eye” (30). On seeing the fruits, Laura professes:

How fair the vine must grow
 Whose grapes are so luscious;
 How warm the wind must blow
 Thro’ those fruit bushes. (Rossetti 60-63)

Sort of mesmerized by the fruits, Laura describes them as being rare and succulent, difficult to pass up. Another clue that Laura is involved in sinning is that sin generally causes one to lose a part of oneself. Laura, who doesn’t have any money to purchase the fruits, is told by the goblin men that she has “much gold upon [her] head” (123) and that she should “[b]uy from [them] with a golden curl” (125). After “clipp[ing] a precious golden lock” (126), Laura “drop[s] a tear more rare than pearl” (127). In order for Laura to receive the fruits she desire, she has to give up something. And the thing which Laura gives up is something valuable to her. On giving up a “precious golden lock,” Laura is saddened—hence her tear. Laura has determined that losing this valued part of herself is worth the satisfaction she hopes to receive from the tantalizing fruits.

To Laura’s enjoyment, the fruits prove to taste just as delicious as she expected they would. Describing Laura’s enjoyment of how the fruits tasted, the speaker explains that she:

Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
 Sweeter than honey from the rock.
 Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
 Clearer than water flowed that juice;

She never tasted such before. (Rossetti 128-132)

The fruits are described as sweet, strong and clear—suggesting a uniquely pleasurable taste. Similar to sin, the fruits only have instant gratification, leaving the sinner yearning for more—which Laura soon experiences: “How should it cloy with length of use?” (133) and “I ate and ate my fill, / Yet my mouth waters still” (165-166). Hopeful of growing her own fruits in order to indulge whenever she pleases, Laura “gathered up one kernel-stone” (138) before heading home. Sin is usually correlated with night and darkness which is why, after sinning Laura, unlike her sister who desires “for the mere bright day’s delight, / [...] long[s] for the night” (213-214).

When Laura is unable to receive the pleasure of the fruits any more, she “sat up in a passionate yearning, / And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept / As if her heart would break” (266-268). Laura desires to once again taste the pleasurable delights of the fruits which she no longer has access to. But on eating the fruits once more—and for the last time, the speaker, referring to Laura states “Her lips began to scorch, / That juice was wormwood to her tongue, / She loathed the feast.” (493-495). Laura no longer tastes the gratifying pleasures that she once tasted in the fruit juices. Disappointed with her outcome, Laura regrets her quickness to indulge in the juices of the fruits. Referring to Laura’s reaction, the speaker states:

Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
 Rent all her robe, and wrung
 Her hands in lamentable haste,
 And beat her breast. (496-499)

Although it is uncertain whether or not Laura beats herself for not receiving the pleasures she expected or because she realizes her mistake, she, on the other hand, is left disappointed—which can be expected of the overall outcome affects of sin on a person. Playing the moral role, the speaker, disappointed in Laura states, “She gorged on bitterness without a name: / Ah! fool, to choose such part / Of soul-consuming care!” (510-512). The speaker is displeased with Laura’s yearning to consume herself in something so useless and destructive to the soul. Describing Laura’s repentance of her sin, Shaulkhauser states that “she is reborn in tears that drop ‘like rain / After long and sultry drouth’ [489-490]. She ‘rent all her robe’ [497] and ‘beat her breast’ [499] in her agony of repentance; she ‘loathed the feast’ of sin. The fire of purification overcomes the ‘lesser flame’[509] of guilt in her soul.”

The pleasure that Laura receives from these fruits is described as very sensual, which suggest that the sin is connected to sexuality. Laura is described as sucking the goblin men’s fruits. The speaker explains, “She sucked and sucked and sucked the more / Fruits which that unknown orchard bore; / She sucked until her lips were sore;” (134-136). Sucking is a very sexual word, especially in the sense that it is used. Laura clearly finds pleasure in this because despite the soreness of her lips, she “sucked.” These fruits of the goblin men can easily be viewed as the male sex organ. Being that there seems to be a lot of sucking going on, one can guess that Laura is performing oral sex on the goblin men. The pleasure that Laura is described as receiving is virginal, something that she’s never felt or tasted before—which gives the impression that she is performing premarital sex. In her article, Shurbutt describes Laura’s purchasing of the fruits with “her golden lock, an obvious sexual gesture, and in clipping her lock, she trades her

chastity to the male world of [...] sexual freedom” (41). Losing ones virginity out of wedlock in this poem is described as immoral and having harsh repercussions. Jeanie, who once partook in the action of eating the goblin men’s fruits, is described as someone “Who should have been a bride; / But who for joys brides hope to have / Fell sick and died” (313-315). Because Jeanie welcomed the sinful sexual joys of the fruits she has to deal with the consequences. Jeanie should not have partaken in sexual desires that women hope to perform before becoming a bride. The descriptions of these women’s experiences with the eating of the fruits prove the sensual sin that is involved in this process.

Just as the fruit represents temptation, the goblin men—who are the evil that the sisters battle to stay away from, are easily interpreted as Satan. Shalkhauser would agree that “Goblins are creatures of the Devil, symbols of Satan himself, who carry with them all the temptations of the world, as did Satan when he tempted Adam, and later, Christ” (1). In stating “At last the evil people” (437), the speaker clearly states that the goblin men are evil: These goblin men are portrayed as having animalistic features and tendencies. The speaker explains:

One had a cat’s face,
 One whisked a tail,
 One tramped at a rat’s pace,
 One crawled like a snail,
 One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
 One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry. (Rossetti 71-76)

Rather than portraying them as having humanistic features, Rossetti portrays the goblin men disguised as animals. When Satan approached woman in the Garden of Eden, he appeared in the form of an animal himself. The animalistic features of these goblin men can easily be related to Satan's animalistic disguise. In the form of a serpent, Satan tempted women to eat the fruits of the forbidden tree.

Daily, the goblin men tempted maids to "come buy [their] orchard fruits" (3). Their perseverance to keep coming back daily to tempt these women to sin resembles Satan's determination to constantly tempt God's children to sin. In the same way that Satan hid his deceptive motif when speaking to Eve, the goblin men, on tempting the maids, masked their true identities by appearing pleasant. Referring to how Laura heard the voices of the goblin men, the speaker states that she heard a "voice like voice of doves" (77) that "sounded kind and full of loves" (79). The fact that the voices of the goblin men sounded like doves gives the impression that they are innocent and pure. They are also portrayed as sounding "kind" with nothing but love to offer. Continuing to describe their approach, the speaker explains:

The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
 In tones as smooth as honey,
 The cat-faced purr'd,
 The rat-paced spoke a word
 Of welcome. (Rossetti 107-111)

The goblin men may already know that they are perceived by the maidens as people to stay clear of, so they attempt to disprove these accusations by killing them with kindness using soft spoken "word[s] / of welcome." The speaker, who clearly knows that the

goblin men are hiding their true motives, exposes to the readers the deceptive behaviors of the goblin men—which Laura is unaware of. The speaker describes the goblin men as:

Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother. (Rossetti 93-96)

This cunning portrayal of the goblin men, by the speaker, provides the readers an impression that the goblin men are sneaky and not to be trusted. When Laura's life starts slipping away after eating the forbidden fruits that already took the life of poor Jeanie, the plot of the goblin men is revealed. Like Satan, they also seem to want the human race (particularly women) to perish.

And when they don't get their way—which we see when they are unable to convince Lizzie to stay with them and eat their fruits, they immediately drop the kind act. The speaker explains:

They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling. (Rossetti 390-394)

The welcoming, purring, smooth talking goblin men described earlier as peaceful are now being depicted as ferocious and angry. Their "purring" has turned into "snarling." Because Lizzie would rather take her fruits "to go" instead of eating them in their presence, the goblin men get violently abusive with her. The goblin men are described as scratching and stomping her. Clearly, the kind show they had put on was merely an act.

Their evil aggressive actions can even be viewed as a rape. The goblin men “tore her gown and soiled her stocking” (403). They ripped off her clothes and forced their fruits (male sex organs) on her. The act of “squeeze[ing] their fruits / Against her mouth to make her eat” describes a failed attempt at forced oral sex. The revealing of their hidden agenda, along with their forceful abuse substantiates just how evil the goblin men are in relation to Satan.

In relation to the goblin men portraying Satan, Laura and Jeannie can easily be related to Adam and/or Eve. Likewise, both of these women are tempted into eating fruits forbidden. Laura knows that she should not look at the goblin men and that she should not be charmed by their offers. Laura states:

We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots? (42-45)

Laura seems to be trying to convince herself that she should stay away from the goblin men. However, her interest in them comes out in her speech. Although Laura is well aware of the danger she may face if she loiters around the goblin men, she is unable to keep her eyes off them. Describing Laura’s reluctance to keep her eyes off the goblin men, the speaker states that:

Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
“Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,

Down the glen tramp little men.” (52-55)

Laura who, earlier, told her sister not to look at goblin men finds herself unable to follow her own advice. Her curiosity easily lures her toward the goblin men. Laura, who was earlier telling her sister that they “must not look at goblin men,” now tells her “Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie, / Down the glen tramp little men” (54-55). Unable to fight temptation, Laura “[chooses] to linger / Wondering at each merchant man” (69-70). Laura easily becomes subdued by the wonder of the goblin men and finds herself powerless to restrain from turning toward them. The speaker explains that she, unable to force herself to shake off temptation:

...stretched her gleaming neck

Like a rush-imbedded swan,

Like a lily from the beck,

Like a moonlit poplar branch,

Like a vessel at the launch

When its last restraint is gone. (81-86)

With nothing holding her back, Laura becomes easily influenced by the offers of the goblin men.

Reminiscent of Eve, Laura has made the mistake of giving evil, the goblin men (and in Eve’s case, Satan), the opportunity to influence her into doing something that she knew was wrong—which is the act of eating the fruits forbidden. Laura is unable to overcome the desires of the flesh. Not only does Laura indulge in the fruits forbidden, she wants her sister to also partake in them and receive the benefits they have to offer. Speaking to Lizzie after returning home, Laura tells her sister that she will “bring [her]

plums tomorrow” (170). Similarly, Eve also offered some of the forbidden fruit to her loved one, Adam.

The result of eating the fruit is death. The speaker describes that “Her tree of life drooped from the root” (260). This tree of life that Rossetti mentions relates to the tree of Life in Genesis—which provides life. In stating that her tree is drooping, suggests that her life is fading. Following her disobedience, Laura’s life starts slipping away.

Describing Laura’s slow progression towards death, the speaker states:

Her hair grew thin and gray;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away. (277-280)

Laura quickly starts aging before her time. The vibrant life that was once inside of her is slowly vanishing. Laura becomes weak and lazy. She no longer tends to her household chores. The speaker clarifies:

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat. (293-298)

Being uninterested in life and too weak to do anything, Laura becomes depressed and hopeless. She no longer partakes in her everyday activities—which include eating. With her tasks seeming tedious to her, Laura only “longs after the somber, dark, guilt-infested

night” (Shalkhauser). Later on, becoming aware of the negative effects that the fruits have on her body, Laura states that her “light” is “hidden” and her “life” is “wasted” (480-481).

Jeanie, as introduced by Lizzie, is a maiden who “Took [the goblin men’s] gifts both choice and many, / Ate their fruits and wore their flowers” (149-150). Similarly to Laura’s symptoms after eating the fruits of the goblin men, Jeanie also “dwindled and grew grey” (156). Unlike Laura, who cheats death, Jeanie “fell with the first snow, / While to this day no grass will grow / where she lies low” (157-159). Both Jeanie and Lizzie have become susceptible to death after eating the fruits of the evil goblin men. Likewise, after eating fruit forbidden offered by evil, Adam and Eve—who were once immortal, became mere mortals susceptible to death. It wasn’t until Jesus sacrificed his life on the cross that they, including their familial lineage, were able to have life after death.

Lizzie is depicted as the wiser Christ-like sister. She, similarly to her sister, knows that they “should not peep at goblin men” (49). But her warnings sound more genuine than Laura’s. While Laura “reared her glossy head” (52) to look at the goblin men, Lizzie “covered up her eyes” (50). And when “Curious Laura chose to linger” (69), Lizzie “thrust a dimpled finger / In each ear, shut eyes and ran” (67-68). Lizzie is unwavering to her words. She refuses to stay in the midst of temptation and allow herself to be swayed by the goblin men and their fruits. The hardest thing that one can do when facing temptation is to run away rather than attempt to reason with the temptations. Lizzie has the strength and the willpower which her sister lacks. On Laura’s return home, Lizzie welcomes and “[me[ets] her at the gate / Full of wise upbraidings” (141-

142). Lizzie welcomes her sister and speaks to her using a parable—one of Christ’s most used strategies when preaching to his followers. Lizzie tells Laura that she “should not stay so late, / Twilight is not good for maidens” (143-144), and reminds her of Jeanie’s story. After this, Lizzie seems to forgive her sister as they lay “Golden head by golden head, / Like two pigeons in one nest / Folded in each other’s wings” (184-186). Lizzie clearly welcomes and forgives her sister for her transgressions. Instead of scolding her sister, Lizzie embraces her, holds her and comforts her as they sleep in their bed in pairs. One can possibly interpret this scene as having an erotic undertone due to the fact that Laura and Lizzie sleep “Cheek to cheek and breast to breast / Locked together in one nest” (197-198). Critics have mentioned that these lines suggest a lesbian tone; however there is also a spiritual element in this description. My tendency is to agree with Sarah Fiona Winters:

It is one of the ironies of literary history that present-day readers inevitably see lesbian eroticism in this scene where the sisters embrace. To Rossetti, it could well have seemed that the representation of two sisters embracing automatically excluded any hint of eroticism from the physical expression of love. (19)

Cumberland develops this argument by giving examples such as St. John the Divine’s relationship and communion with God being intimate (118). Rossetti is simply suggesting the pure, spiritual and innocent welcoming love, forgiveness and compassion of one sister to the other.

When Lizzie realizes that her sister is getting worse, “dwindling / [,and] knocking at Death’s door” (321) ever since eating the fruits forbidden, she decides to redeem her

sister from her pain and agony. Since Lizzie is the only one who can still hear the cries of the goblin men, she decides that she will confront the goblin men and bring back their fruits to Laura. But the goblin men offer her to “take a seat with [them], / Honour and eat with [them]” (368-369). Instead of easily being tempted by their offer like Laura, Lizzie tells the goblin men:

If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits tho' much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee. (386-389)

Lizzie refuses to become a victim of their callous design. Similarly, Jesus, when approached and tempted by Satan in the wilderness—while fasting, did not allow himself to fall into his manipulative strategy. Attempting to save her sister, Lizzie is threatened and beaten by the goblin men—similarly, but less harsh, than the way Christ was tormented when attempting to save all of mankind. The goblin men elbowed, scratched, pinched, kicked, knocked, mauled, and stamped Lizzie to prevent her from accomplishing her goal. Despite her pain and suffering, Lizzie stands “White and golden” (399-408) and “utter[ed] not a word” (430). This, too, is Christ-like, according to Cumberland: “While Lizzie does not literally nail herself to a cross, her gesture is equivalent in female terms: she leaves herself vulnerable by placing her body in danger at the goblins’ hands. She allows herself to be assaulted in order to take back the restorative fruit” (120). Although Lizzie suffered abuse from the goblin men, she stands her ground, says nothing, and refuses to be defeated. Once again the speaker, playing the moral role, explaining Lizzie’s strength and will power, states: “One may lead a horse to water /

Twenty cannot make him dring” (422-423). The speaker describes Lizzie’s firmness as being like a “lily in a flood” (409) and a “royal virgin town” (418). These descriptions, along with “white and golden” relate to purity, royalty, and virginity—everything that Christ epitomizes.

Lizzie’s goal to purchase fruits to bring home to her sister fails, but she is successfully able to procure, on her body, enough of the fruits that the goblin men smeared all over her when they struck and abused her. While they did this, Lizzie:

[...] laughed in heart to feel the drip
 Of juice that syrugged al her face,
 And lodged in dimples of her chin,
 And streaked her neck which quaked like curd. (432-436)

The juices of the fruits dripping on her body were the next best thing to the actual fruits that she could bring home to her sister. While enduring her torment, Lizzie manages to find purpose from it. As she felt the juices dripping, she could only think of how they—the juices, will be useful to her sister’s deliverance. Similarly, as Christ endured his pain, his mind was set on accomplishing his goal of delivering mankind. When the goblin men are finally “Worn out by her resistance” (438), they flee, leaving anxious Lizzie on her speeding journey home. On arriving home, Lizzie cries to Laura:

Come and kiss me.
 Never mind my bruises,
 Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
 Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
 Goblin pulp and goblin dew. (466-470)

Lizzie tells her sister to come and thank her for her courage to face the goblin men.

Lizzie wants her sister to show her appreciation by hugging and kissing her. Lizzie suggests that she sucks them off her.

Critics have mentioned that these lines suggest a lesbian tone. Sure, sucking the juices off her sister appears sexual, but surely Lizzie's intentions were not to come home and have sexual relations with her sister. Instead, her aim is to provide her sister with the juices that prove pivotal to her recovery. In fact, although the lesbian theory is interesting, we can't forget Rossetti's devotion to religion which inspires her to write about the Eucharist. Rossetti, instead of describing a lesbian relationship between the two sisters, is describing the intimate relationship between Christ and his followers.

Responding to the erotic atmosphere presented, Cumberland states that:

The erotic element in Laura and Lizzie's relationship is further evidence of their spirituality, much like the sublimated erotic relationship between the worshipper and the divine, a longing for the Godhead that often manifested itself in highly sexualized language and imagery. (118)

Lizzie's sacrifice can be seen in relation to the Holy Communion at Christ's Last Supper with his disciples. Lizzie states:

Eat me, drink me, love me;

Laura, make much of me:

For your sake I have braved the glen

And had to do with goblin merchant men. (471-474)

Referring to the Holy Communion, Lizzie tells her sister to drink the juices in remembrance of her sacrifice. Reinforcing the Eucharistic imagery in this quote,

Shurbutt states “With heroic self-sacrifice, she [Lizzie] has purchased salvation for her sister, and the redemption she offers pulsates with Eucharistic imagery” (42). Like Christ’s sacrifice—which redeems the world, Lizzie’s sacrifice has also delivered her sister. The speaker explains that:

[Laura] fell at last;
 Pleasure past and anguish past,
 Is it death or is it life?
 Life out of death. (521-523)

Laura, no longer seeking the pleasures of the fruits (sin), is redeemed and is able to have life once again—which is what Christ did for us. The speaker explains that Laura “awoke as from a dream” (537). “Laura dies into life when she renounces her sin, is baptized by tears into salvation, and accepts her sister’s sacrifice” (Shalkhauser). The fruits of the goblin men bring about death, but Lizzie transforms the fruits into a healing remedy. Describing the differences between the offers of Lizzie and the goblin men, Cumberland states:

Unlike the goblin merchants, Lizzie offers herself to her sister with the right attitude, freely and out of love, with no expectation in return. Her fruit therefore heals instead of harms. The goblin fruit only serves to commodify and corrupt human and divine relationships. Its transformative powers lead to a slow withering away, as opposed to the fruit of Christ, which has the power to transform and heal. (118)

Cumberland goes further, mentioning that the fruit of the goblin men and Lizzie’s fruit are different. The fruit of the goblin men is evil and used to destroy, but Lizzie is able to

transform it into fruit that heals and purifies. Cumberland proves this by mentioning Christ's apple as mentioned in the Song of Songs, which brings "life and health, not sin" (118-119). This explains why the fruit that Lizzie offers her sister revives her; as a Christ figure, Lizzie offers Laura fruits that Christ offers.

Lizzie is described as the Christ-like sister whose undying love has the power to restore to health that which the evil goblin men sought to obliterate. She encompasses Christ-like characteristics, such as:

To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands. (564-567)

Lizzie is portrayed as Laura's rock, strength and guidance. Rossetti portrays Laura as the first man, Adam, who brings sin into the world and Lizzie as the second Adam (Christ), who gives humans a second chance at life and correcting the wrong of the first Adam.

The ability of "Goblin Market" to bring forth many different critical analyses, gains it more respect in the literary realm. But nonetheless, it is essentially a religious poem, especially when the historical life of Rossetti is taken into consideration. This poem screams out Rossetti's beliefs and viewpoints on religion, ranging from temptation, sin and its affects, and the power of redemption—which are key focal points in the Bible.

Works Cited

- Arseneau, Mary. "Christina Rossetti." Dictionary of Literary Biography 240: Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century British Women Poets. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Ed. William B. Thesing. Literature Resource Center. SUNY Old Westbury Library (11 April 2006).
www.oldwestbury.edu
- Cumberland, Debra. "Ritual and Performance in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market.'" *Things of the Spirit: Women Writers Constructing Spirituality*. Ed. Kristina K. Groover. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004. 109-127.
- de Groot, H. B. "Christina Rossetti." Dictionary of Literary Biography 35: Victorian Poets After 1850. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Ed. William E. Fredeman and Ira B. Nadel. Literature Resource Center. SUNY Old Westbury Library (11 April 2006).
www.oldwestbury.edu

Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1994.

Marylu, Hill. "'Eat me, drink me, love me': Eucharist and the erotic body in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market.'" Victorian Poetry: 43.4 (Winter 2005): 455-73.
Literature Resource Center. SUNY Old Westbury Library (3 March 2006)
www.oldwestbury.edu

Mcgillis, Roderick. "Christina Rossetti." Writers for Children. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988. 483-491. Literature Resource Center. SUNY Old Westbury Library (11 April 2006).
www.oldwestbury.edu

Rossetti, Christina. "Goblin Market." The Longman Anthology British Literature Second Compact Edition Vol. B. Ed. David Damrosch. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004. 759-71.

Shalkhauser, Marian. "The Feminine Christ." The Victorian Newsletter: 10 (Autumn 1956):19-20. Literature Resource Center SUNY Old Westbury Library(3 March, 2006).
www.oldwestbury.edu

Shurbutt, Sylvia Bailey. "Revisionist Mythmaking in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market': Eve's Apple and Other Questions Revised and Reconsidered." The Victorian Newsletter: 82 (1992 Fall), 40-44.

Susina, Jan. "Christina Georgina Rossetti." Dictionary of Literary Biography: 163 British Children's Writers, 1800-1880. A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Ed.

Meena Khorana. Literature Resource Center. SUNY Old Westbury Library (11 April 2006).

www.oldwestbury.edu

Winters, Sarah Fiona. "Questioning Milton, Questioning God: Christina Rossetti's Challenges to Authority in 'Goblin Market' and 'The Prince's Progress.'" The Journal of Pre Raphaelite Studies, 10 (Fall 2001): 15-26.